

Etiquette Quick Tips

Interacting with People with Cognitive, Intellectual or Psychiatric Disabilities

People with Cognitive, Intellectual or Psychiatric Disabilities

A cognitive, Intellectual, or psychiatric disability can affect a person's understanding, memory, language, judgment, learning and related information processing and communication functions. These disabilities include individuals with intellectual disabilities, head injury, strokes, autism, Alzheimer's disease, and emotional disabilities.

- Offer information in a clear, concise, concrete, and simple manner. Sometimes added forms of visual communication such as gestures, facial expressions, pictures, diagrams or demonstrations are helpful.
- If you are not being understood, adjust your method of communicating. For example, demonstrate how to use a key card to open the door. When necessary, repeat information using different words or a different form of communication. Allow time for the information to be fully understood.
- Use common words and short simple sentences. Try to limit one idea per sentence.
- A slow response or lack of response does not necessarily mean the person is not aware of you or what you said. Allow time for people to process your words, respond slowly or in their own way.
- Make sure the person understands your message.
- When offering help, wait until your offer is accepted before doing anything.
- Do not assume all people can read well or read at all. Use simple pictures or drawings to show instructions. Treat and interact with the person who has an intellectual disability as an adult.

